

# Section V

## Producer Experiences

Data on conservation effects are developed by observing and documenting the experiences of landusers. Typically, conservationists will make observations of conservation treatments applied by one or more landusers in the first or second year following the application and record the effects. This data is recorded in conservation field notes. Effects information may also be available from conservation field trials, university research plots or other trials in the area. Experience gleaned from actual operating farms during and after the implementation of a RMS is the most desired source of information regarding the effects of conservation. This can come from:

- Case Studies of experience gained from a specific on-farm conservation undertaking.
- On-farm Field Trials of new or unproved techniques or technology.
- Conservation Effects Worksheets are structured conservation technical assistance notes used to record the effects of a resource treatment. CEW's collected from a series of farms can provide very reliable data for use in conservation planning.

### Case Study

Case studies describe before and after treatment resource conditions. A case study demonstrates how a recommended conservation treatment achieved a cooperator's objectives and effectively treated resource problems. Sharing case studies with potential cooperators will promote new conservation planning opportunities and

accomplish additional levels of treatment. Case studies are not intended to be intensive scientific studies to determine cause and effect relationships. Case studies can be used for public information campaigns including brochures, information sheets, training material and news articles.

There are potential problems with case studies. Attributing change to a conservation treatment is complex and is difficult to predict based on only one example. When formulating case studies consideration should be given to weather variability, changes in management and measurement error. These weaknesses do not diminish the usefulness of case studies. It should be made clear to cooperators that results achieved on your neighbor's farms could reasonably be achieved on your own farm.

Case studies are highly recommended as planning and public information tools, but they are not mandatory nor are there any required formats that must be followed. The same results may come from university research, conservation field trials and the expert knowledge of others. Case studies provide "effects" information for the FOTG and are simply another planning tool for providing assistance.

The key to a successful case study is to select resource situations with a broad applicability to many landusers. Case studies should be developed for major resource concerns on soil mapping units and in resource use situations that represent a significant portion of the resource users in your area.

Formulating a case study follows the following steps:

- A. Select a resource concern that is typical with many landusers in the planning area.
- B. Select the most common crop rotation or livestock enterprise in the planning area
- C. Select a cooperative landuser that is knowledgeable, respected and an “early adopter”.
- D. Record the benchmark situation before the conservation treatment.
- E. Select and apply the conservation treatment.
- F. Identify the effects of the conservation treatment, both positive and negative effects.
- G. Record how the effects influenced decisionmaker, include environmental, economic and social impacts.
- H. Document and update the case study so other landusers can use the information to make informed decisions.
- I. File case studies in Section V of the FOTG, and use them for planning, training or share with other field offices.

*Note: File producer experiences and case studies following this section.*

## **Procedural References**

This section contains references and examples of specific procedures used to determine and compare conservation effects.

*Note: File “Procedural References – Guidance for the Development and Use of Case Studies as a Source of Conservation Effects Information” following this section.*